



MEMO



N O R T H C A R O L I N A D I V I S I O N O F
E M E R G E N C Y M A N A G E M E N T

John Gerber Serves Dual Role: NCEM and Army National Guard

It is not unusual to find employees who have served in the armed forces prior to joining state government. Many start another career in public service until they are ready for their second retirement. In fact, several NCEM staff members are retired military.

It is becoming more common, however, to find state employees who *still* serve in the armed forces part-time or as a reservist while also serving as a state employee. John Gerber is one such employee.

Most days, John works in the NCEM's Geospatial Technology & Management branch as the National Flood Insurance Program state coordinator. John and his team work with the 510 plus communities in North Carolina that participate in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP).



John Gerber stands with the American flag flown over Baghdad.

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The NFIP was created by Congress in 1968 to provide a way for homeowners, renters and business owners to financially protect themselves from flood waters associated with hurricanes, tropical storms, heavy rains, or other water induced emergencies. Communities have to participate in the program before property owners can apply for flood coverage.

"We provide technical assistance, a lot of training and we audit the community's program for compliance to the NFIP guidelines," explained Gerber. "As state coordinator, I'm responsible for making sure we meet the scope of work obligated under a FEMA grant."

John is also an engineer in the floodplain mapping program. Like most employees in EM, he says he serves dual roles.

Most of John's experience in NFIP was with emergency management. Prior to coming to the division, he was a highway engineer with North Carolina Department of Transportation. When John joined the division in 1994, it was as a NFIP engineer. In 2004 when his predecessor retired, he assumed the duties of state coordinator.

As state coordinator, Gerber travels to communities talking with local officials and answering questions about how the program will affect the community and its citizens.

"I enjoy working with local governments; that's the most rewarding part of my job," said Gerber. "By helping them to better interpret the rules and regulations, and being there to support their post-disaster efforts, I feel like we are helping them to build safer communities."

His typical day involves reviewing engineering studies and models from counties and local municipalities, answering phone calls and responding to emails. Counties and municipalities will send their engineering studies to the state and request a review.

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John Gerber Continued

“A lot of the counties and municipalities do not have the technical expertise or experience to do the review, so they ask us,” said Gerber.

John also is a Major in the Aviation Branch of the N.C. Army National Guard. February will mark his 22nd years as a member of the National Guard. He joined in 1988, enlisting for two years before going to Officer Candidate School in Fort Benning, Georgia. From there, he went into flight school.

He deployed to Baghdad, Iraq in September 2008 with the 449 Theater Aviation Brigade. At the time, the 120 member aviation brigade headquarters out of Morrisville, N.C. was the higher authority for all army aviation missions in southern Iraq, approximately 80,000 square miles of battle space.

“All of the army aviation units’ – Blackhawks, Apaches, Chinooks, fixed wing, and UAV’s – missions filtered through us and we approved, disapproved and adjusted if necessary and provided resources,” explained Gerber.

John was sent to Ali Airbase in Talil, in southern Iraq as project manager on the building new infrastructure for future combat aviation brigade footprint. There are two long-standing enduring bases in Iraq for aviation: one in Balad, the other in Talil. The one in Talil was nothing but sand. Projects and funding were in place, but the groundbreaking had not occurred.

The Army wanted to move the entire brigade and operations from Baghdad to Talil and there were only four months (December to April) to complete construction, for projects projected to be into August.

“My job was to understand the projects and coordinate with the wide variety of military agencies and civilians involved to get the job done quickly,” said Gerber.

John and his team of ten coordinated with U.S. civilian contractors, U.S. Air Force, US Army Corps of Engineers, different active duty Army engineering units, local Iraqis and contractors from India.

The job was completed in mid-April. Between 1,500 to 2,000 aviation members moved in to the newly-built space.

The new facility included a 14,000 square foot office complex for aviation operations, 136 housing units that accommodate 816 people, office trailers for subordinate battalions to use, the first contractor only army aviation maintenance complex in Iraq for all 3 helicopter airframes, opening of a new FARP, (forward arming and refueling point), opening and managing a new dining facility, and an 11 acre parking area for armed aircraft.

“There was little there when we got there. But, we ended up creating a 20 plus acre functional facility...all on what was open desert,” said Gerber.

The most challenging part of the project was trying to motivate the civilian contractors to work on task when the time lines were not written in their contract and favored the contractors.

We were challenged by pushing them beyond what they were contractually obligated to do, he said.

Operation Iraqi Freedom was John’s second deployment. His first was to Afghanistan in 2003-2004. He was the delta company commander (over aviation maintenance) with the attack helicopter battalion, an Apache unit.

In addition of being a project manager in Talil, John also flew medevac missions with a unit based out of Alaska.

On Sept. 4th, NCEM Director Doug Hoell received a package from John that included an American Flag and a certificate stating the flag was carried in a Blackhawk helicopter on a combat mission over Baghdad on Aug. 17th. The mission for this particular flag involved flying soldiers and officials over Baghdad. For 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, soldiers and officials are flown to designations to keep them off of the roads because of improvised explosive devices and other danger threats on the ground.

“Air crews are proud to fly the American flag on combat missions over Iraq. Generally, we have it visible in the cockpit as we fly,” said John.

When asked why he sent the flag, Gerber responded, “NCEM has been extremely supportive of my roll in the military with two deployments and other military commitments. It was something I wanted to send back to the family and friends in EM.”

John left his role of project manager and medevac pilot earlier this fall returned to his duties as NFIP state coordinator and floodplain mapping engineer on Nov. 3rd.

State Expands Program to Help Pets During Emergencies

Until a few years ago, many pet owners who were told to evacuate and seek safe shelter from approaching hurricanes were forced to choose between abandoning their animals and ignoring evacuation orders. North Carolina emergency management officials saw the impacts from such a dilemma 10 years ago as hundreds, perhaps thousands, of household pets were lost to Hurricane Floyd and the subsequent floods.

“Back then, pet owners were forced to make a difficult decision,” said Doug Hoell, director of N.C. Division of Emergency Management. They either left their pets at home as they sought refuge in a shelter, found accommodations that allowed pets, or ignored the recommendation to evacuate. Shelters were meant to house humans only, not animals; so many people were forced to leave their furry friends behind.”

Those rescue and sheltering efforts that did exist a decade ago were done by volunteer groups and local agencies. But the activities were often uncoordinated and the groups had varying capabilities for dealing with distressed animals stranded on rooftops, inside unventilated homes or even chained outside.

Following Floyd, more than 30 public and private agencies came together to establish the North Carolina State Animal Response Team (SART) to respond to and recover endangered animals during emergencies. However, any solutions for pet shelters remained a local responsibility.

It wasn't until Hurricane Katrina struck the Gulf in 2005 that federal and state governments began to reexamine the possibility of mass care shelters and response plans for pets. During Katrina, 2,000 to 3,000 animals died; and many pet owners were again forced to choose between abandoning their animals or ignoring evacuation orders.

In 2006, the Federal Emergency Management Agency was given the authority to help develop the Pet Evacuation and Transportation Standards Act (PETS Act). The PETS Act requires government agencies to accommodate pets in their plans to evacuate residents during disasters.

“This act didn't tell us exactly how to do it, but told us we needed to be able to support companion animals during evacuations,” said Warren Moore, NCEM Human Services Manager.

In response to the PETS Act, North Carolina in 2006 created the Companion Animal Mobile Equipment Trailer program (CAMET). Equipped with crates, a generator and enough durable goods to support up to 50 animals; the CAMETs set up temporary housing for pets in the same location as their owners.



Inside of a CAMET



Animal rescue during Hurricane Floyd, Sept. 1999.

The goal of the program is to co-locate the animals with their owners; people stay in one building, while the animals are housed in a temperature-controlled facility nearby. The animals and humans are not sheltered in direct.

“Health and safety regulations require that we maintain different ventilation systems and entrances for people and animals,” says Moore.

For instance, during an exercise at Warren County High School, people were housed in the cafeteria and a few corridors along the front of the building and used the main lobby to enter the shelter. The animals, however, were housed at the far rear of the school and brought in through the back doors of the masonry shop.

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CAMET Continued

“During the exercise, humans and animals were clearly separated into different areas for those who may have allergies or other concerns,” said Tim Johnson, state CAMET Program Manager. “It was so far away, you couldn’t hear dogs barking, yet both locations were under the same roof.”

NCEM developed the CAMET concept as a way to shelter animals. The division then presented the idea to the N.C. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services and the United States Humane Society (USHS) to seek funding support.

“We strongly embraced the idea because we felt so many animals were ignored following Floyd and Katrina,” said Sharron Stewart, Agriculture’s emergency programs director. “Several counties and grassroots entities were already addressing the problem, but the state needed to address it on a collective level that could bring resources together prior to a catastrophic event.”



Members from Bellhaven Fire Department set up CAMET cages..

Agricultural partners and the Humane Society donated \$120,000 to SART to purchase and outfit the first nine CAMET trailers. SART then donated the trailers to state Division of Emergency Management.

“The first nine CAMET trailers were strategically positioned to help support coastal evacuations if needed,” said Johnson. “The trailers are easily accessible and can be transported to another location if needed.”

Local counties used \$220,000 in homeland security grant funds to purchase 15 additional CAMET trailers in March 2008. Two more trailers were assigned to local counties in August 2009. Since the trailers are locally owned, the individual counties are responsible for deploying the asset to others if needed. The counties also can customize their storage vehicle with additional equipment and supplies they determine necessary for their population.

“The CAMET concept has been so well received, that many jurisdictions have developed their own trailers,” said Johnson. “A community can purchase an equipped CAMET from NCSART or they may decide to develop their own.”

Although the CAMETs have different owners, the trailers can be requested using the statewide mutual aid agreement to seek a trailer directly from a county or by calling the local NCEM area coordinator to ask for a state-owned CAMET.

In times of mobilization, a CAMET is operated by personnel who know how to care for animals and use the equipment. Additional training is helpful for volunteers who will assist in CAMET operations. Both the N.C. Emergency Management Division and State Animal Response Team, provide training for agencies and individuals that may use CAMET equipment or work in the animal shelters.

Approximately 60 people attended a class last May in Martin County. The training introduced the sheltering capabilities of a CAMET and its roles and responsibilities during an evacuation. Participants learned how to properly setup, operate, manage and demobilize a CAMET. The training also included a segment on how to interpret animal body language.

Mike Stalls, Martin County Emergency Management says “the training was of great value to our area (Washington, Hyde, Tyrell and Martin Counties). This area is known for having a lot of pets and horses and knowing how to properly care for them during events will reassure the owners in their time of need.”

While no CAMET has been used during a hurricane evacuation, the units were set up in preparation for storms and there have been several situations where the equipment was used during other animal emergencies.

Lincoln County used three CAMET trailers in August 2008 for an animal seizure and rescue operation. Authorities recovered approximately 400 animals and used the CAMET to tag, house, feed and water the malnourished animals.

“These units were very beneficial to the response and recovery efforts,” says Mike Futrell, Lincoln County Fire Marshall.

A CAMET was also used during the Evans Road fire in eastern North Carolina in July 2008.

“The CAMET enabled us to house 11 pets that otherwise could have been in danger if their homes had caught on fire. I don’t think those residents would have come to the shelter if we had not provided for their animals,” says John Pack, Beaufort County Emergency Management Director.

State emergency management officials would like to see CAMET trailers in every county and more exercise and training at the county level to encourage citizens to become acquainted with the program. Besides increasing awareness of the program, such outreach may generate additional volunteers to help in CAMET operations during an emergency.

“The CAMET program is a uniquely strong collaboration between government agencies and a good use of tax payer’s money,” Stewart concludes.

NCEM...Year-end Highlights

As 2009 comes to a close and N.C. Emergency Management prepares for the coming year, it is fitting to pause and reflect on all that we have accomplished in the past 12 months.

Exercises

The division planned, developed, coordinated and led a number of large scale exercises that brought together multiple local and state government agencies and non-profit organizations.

- Eastern Shield in April tested 28 agencies, 700 personnel and 200 response vehicles on how they would respond to a weapon of mass destruction scenario at the state port in Morehead City. The exercise demonstrated that the state has good coordination among its federal and local partners despite different interpretations of the incident command system.

- Haywood County’s 30-hour exercise (also in April) tested local and state response capabilities to a major interstate tunnel collapse. More than 200 emergency responders participated in the training.

- A school shooter and hazardous material exercise tested the city of Mooresville, Iredell County and other local and state response agencies. More than 150 participants from 12 agencies and organizations trained together during this one-day event.

- The Governor’s Hurricane Exercise enabled newly-elected state leaders to review and rehearse their responsibilities during a catastrophic event. Gov. Bev Perdue, Lt. Gov. Walter Dalton and Crime Control and Public Safety Sec. Reuben Young saw how the State Emergency Response Team (SERT) works together during a state activation.

- The joint reception, staging, onward movement and integration exercise brought together more than 700 local and state emergency responders and nonprofit organization personnel to test and evaluate the capability of processing and moving resources in and out of the state during the recovery process following any emergency.

- In June, NCEM hosted the first ever statewide exercise to test response capabilities to a major earthquake. For two days, the SERT exercised the emergency response roles and responsibilities to a simulated 5.8 earthquake scenario near Asheville.

In addition, various groups participated in routine exercises such as helo-aquatic, search and rescue, radiological and nuclear power plant, voice interoperability plan for emergency responders and others.



Marines suit for Hazardous Material search in Eastern Shield Exercise held in Morehead city.



Responders help staged victims in a high school shooting and hazardous material exercise held at Mooresville, H.S.

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Programs

In addition, numerous programs and projects made significant contributions or improvements to the state.

- The CAMET program added 15 trailers for local counties to use during events. The trailers are designed to help establish animal shelters during an evacuation.

- Evacuees with special medical needs are now supported by 17 specially-equipped trailers. Each trailer contains supplies to help accommodate evacuees with special medical needs in regular public shelters instead of having to be transported to specialty shelters.

- The Sea Level Rise project is designed to conduct a statewide risk assessment of the potential impacts of the rising ocean caused by climate change.

- The CERT program was reenergized in June with a greater emphasis on attracting young members and on adding the exercise drill component with the 21-hour class time curriculum. CERT is a volunteer grassroots program that provides training in emergency preparedness and basic disaster response techniques.

- A logistics resource database was implemented in July. This web-based management system integrates inventory control, purchasing capabilities and transportation management functions for NCEM.

- Purchasing capabilities were enhanced in July. Additional commodities such as food, water and disaster response equipment were added. The 22 disaster contracts with multiple vendors provides quick turn-around for acquiring goods and services.

- The Floodplain Mapping Program works with FEMA to create and maintain all flood insurance rate maps for North Carolina. All 100 counties have adopted flood plain maps.

- The Points of Distribution Program plan has been developed and tested. A POD site is a location established by county and local governments to distribute commodities to citizens during a disaster. The Adopt-A-POD encourages communities to get involved during disaster recovery and be willing to be a POD if called upon.

- Mass Care Support Trailers provide equipment to support the medically fragile community. The special trailers were released to the counties so they can house evacuees with special medical needs in public shelters.

- The Training Section has sent 341 first responders to Center of Domestic Preparedness classes to receive federal-funded training in areas involving Weapons of Mass Destruction.

Major Events

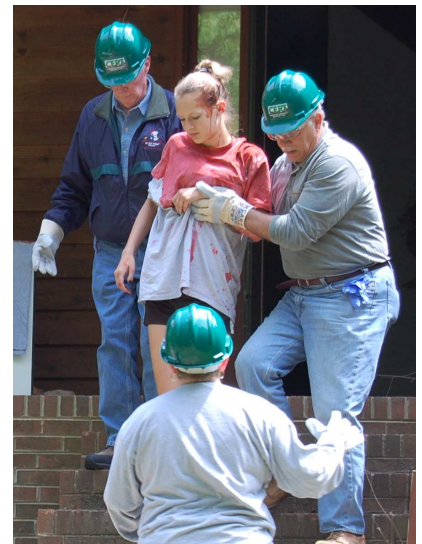
- This year has been relatively quite in terms of disasters and SERT activations. In fact, almost all events have been handled at the city or county emergency management level.

- The only SERT activation was during the winter storm in late January that left 3 – 7 inches of snow across the state. N.C. Emergency Management activated for two days as the governor declared a state of emergency to speed the recovery process.

- In July, NCEM staffers deployed to Alaska through an emergency management assistance compact request. Three employees from the public assistance section spent three weeks in Alaska completing preliminary damage assessments for towns damaged by ice and snow.



State officials participate in the two-day Hurricane exercise.



CERT training exercise conducted in April.

- The division provided equipment support for the ConAgra plant explosion in Wake County in June, as well as for various search and rescue events, flooding and road washouts and hazardous material spills.

As 2010 nears, NCEM is hard at work planning future exercises. The division will conduct full-scale division-wide exercises on a quarterly basis to evaluate the 12 different annexes in the state emergency operations plan, including terrorism, drought, earthquake, winter storms, foreign animal disease and hurricanes. In addition, the division will continue to send first responders to FEMA's Center for Domestic Preparedness for intensive training in the 10 responder disciplines: emergency management, emergency medical service, fire service, governmental administrative, hazardous materials, healthcare, law enforcement, public health, public safety communications, and public works.

Also, the division will soon offer training through online modules. The first course, "Awareness Level Training on Basic Radiological Principles," is scheduled for next spring.

NC National Guard Can Take FEMA CDP Courses

National Guard personnel can attend training courses at any of the FEMA's Center for Domestic Preparedness (CDP) sites or sites working in partnership with the CDP.

"Since National Guard personnel are considered state assets, they fall under the same category as state and local responders," said Tom Tidwell, Center for Domestic Preparedness' Eastern Regional Coordinator.

FEMA's Center for Domestic Preparedness program includes four sites; the main CDP campus location; the Noble Training Facility; the Chemical, Ordnance, Biological and Radiological Training Facility; and the 500 Area Training Facility. All facilities are located in Anniston, AL.

The main CDP facility offers training in emergency management, emergency medical services, fire service, governmental administration, hazardous materials, healthcare, law enforcement, public health, public safety, communications and public works.

The Noble Training Facility, conducted at the former Noble Army Hospital, is the only hospital in the United States dedicated to training hospital and healthcare professionals in disaster preparedness and response.

The Chemical, Ordnance, Biological and Radiological Training Facility provides training in response to the toxic chemical agent environment. The training prepares effective response practices to real-world incidents involving chemical, biological, explosive, radiological or other hazardous material.

The 500 Area Training Facility is a mobile field force training area designed to prepare law enforcement on how to respond to large-scale radiological events.

The CDP also partners with other training facilities to provide specialized training. Some of those locations include: the Energetic Material Research and Testing Center in Socorro, NM; the Nevada Radiological, Nuclear and Hazardous Material Training Site in Bechtel, NV; and the Radiation Emergency Assistance Center/Training Site located in Oak Ridge, TN.

"Many of the states in the eastern region are already sending their Guard personnel to training classes. Some of the units that have attended include Civil Support Teams and CBRNE Enhanced Response Force Package Teams," said Tidwell.

To attend any courses, send applications to Bill Chamberlain at chamberlain@ncem.org or call him at 919-715-9246. For upcoming classes, visit <http://www.nccrimecontrol.org/index2.cfm?a=000003,000010,000027>.

FEMA Holds Radiological Emergency Preparedness Conference

Dec. 5 – 12, Federal Emergency Management Agency will hold a radiological emergency preparedness (REP) conference for officials in the southeast. The conference, held in Orlando, FL, will provide an opportunity for radiological planners to meet and discuss the upcoming changes to the radiological emergency preparedness program and also to develop a nuclear power plant exercise schedule for the next five years. The conference will also provide training on the newly revised radiological emergency preparedness planner's course.

Emergency Management staff from Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee are expected to attend.

For more information, contact Steve Payne, NCEM REP Manager at 919-715-0170 or spayne@ncem.org or Corey Johnson, NCEM REP Assistant Manager at 919-733-3324 or cjohnson@ncem.org.

Two Area Coordinators Call It An End

Two long-time veterans in N.C. Emergency Management are calling it a career at the end of the year. Central Branch Area Coordinators Woody Mashburn and Paul Denison have a combined 25 years serving the division and central North Carolina.

Woody came to NCEM in 1995 and worked in the 24-hour communications center before becoming an area coordinator in Dec. 1997. Through the years, Woody has assisted in more than 25 events and disasters responses, including six emergency management assistance compact deployments. His most memorable response was Hurricane Floyd in 1999.

"The intensity and the duration of our involvement responding to Floyd probably made it my most memorable experience since I've been with the division," says Mashburn.

Woody worked with Anson, Chatham, Lee, Moore, Richmond and Scotland counties during his tenure. According to Woody, he looks forward to the days of doing nothing or making some great contribution to mankind. as his retirement becomes effective January 1, 2010.

Paul joined NCEM in 1998 as an area coordinator. Throughout his 11 years in the field, Paul has responded to more than 35 events and disasters that lasted more than 24 hours, including one emergency management assistance compact deployment. His most memorable disaster response also was Floyd.

"About two days prior to Floyd's landfall, I was deployed to the Pender County EOC. I ended up spending 10 days there," said Denison. "The lessons I learned in their EOC during that time have stayed with me since."

Paul served Franklin, Granville, Halifax, Northampton, Person, Vance and Warren counties. As retirement approaches, Paul says he looks forward to two things: fishing and teaching.

"More time fishing, both on my own and working with the Take-A-Kid Fishing organization, as well as other fishing groups that involve fishing with Veterans," says Denison. "I would also like to teach emergency management classes at the community college level."

"Paul and Woody have served this division well during their careers. Their passion for excellence and dedication to the job is reflected in their many accomplishments. Working with them has made each of us better by simply striving to meet their high standards and expectations. We wish them well as they move into a new phase of their lives. They will be greatly missed by all," says Elaine Wathen, NCEM Information and Plans Chief and their former boss.



Woody Mashburn



Paul Denison



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"In the Business of Saving Lives and Protecting Property"

The North Carolina Division of Emergency Management was formed in 1977 to coordinate the preparedness, response, recovery and mitigation activities of all agencies for emergency management within North Carolina. It performs this mission by planning, organizing, staffing, equipping, training, testing and activating emergency management programs during times of need.